

16
A Guide to CHARITY.

IN A
SERMON
ON

I COR. xvi. 1, 2.

*Now concerning the Collection for the Saints,
as I have given Order to the Churches of
Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first Day
of the Week, let every One of you lay by
him in Store, as GOD hath prosper'd him,
that there be no Gatherings when I come.*

By *Thomas Shephard, M. A.*

Minister of the GOSPEL.

L O N D O N,

Printed for JOHN CLARK, at the Bible
and Crown in the Old-Change. 1713.

Price Three Pence.

A Guide to CHARITY

IN A
SERMON

ON
1 COR. XVI. 1, 2.

Very commendable the Apostle's words in this
as a rule for a Obedience to the Church
of the Holy Spirit, and the
love to God and to the
neighbour as ourselves.

By Thomas Shepherd, M. A.

Minister of the Gospel.

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even so do ye.*

*Upon the first Day of the Week, let every One of
you lay by him in Store, as GOD hath prosper'd
him, that there be no Gatherings when I come.*

THE Apostle in some other Places, does mightily press the *Corinthians*, to Works of *Charity* and *Mercy*: Here in this Place he is giving Directions, touching the right Discharge, and Management of this Duty, in such a way as to make it easy to us, with Help against the Backwardness of our own Hearts, to such kind of Works, and against that Worldliness, which the best of Men are too prone to.

THE Words contain an Apostolical Order, how to manage our Works of Mercy and Charity, to

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the best Advantage to Others, and the most Comfort to our selves, and with the least Reluctancy.

WE have here,

I. THE *Grand Rule*, or *Directory* it self; and that is, to separate our Monies which we design for Charitable Uses, from the rest; and lay it by us in Store for such Purposes; that we may be ready when we are called upon. This He prescribes, as a Means to make it easie to us, that we may do what we do freely, chearfully, and without Reluctancy. The Expression intimates, that laying by to give to the Poor, is TRUE HOARDING: And that *to be rich in good Works*, 1 Tim. 18. *is better than to be rich in Money.*

II. THE *Time* when this is to be done, and that is, on the first Day of the Week.

Q. *WHY then?*

A. BECAUSE that was the Christian Sabbath, it was the Seat of Gospel-Ordinances, and in that Age, *servare Dominicum*, that is, to keep the Lord's Day; was the Testimony of a Christian. The Lord CHRIST promis'd to guide His Apostles, and to be ever with them, but how did He fulfil that Promise to them, if He left them so far to themselves, that they led His Church out of the Way, in so great a Point? Again, the Lord CHRIST taught by His Example, so did His Apostles, *Acts* 1. 1. We have the Example of the Apostles for the Christian Sabbath, on the first Day of the Week; they by little and little removed Gospel-Ordinances from off the Bottom of the Old Testament Sabbath upon the New; as Persons that are removing,
carry

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carry off their Goods and Effects by Degrees, from their Old Habitation to their New.

Q. BUT supposing that to be the Christian Sabbath, why is this Separation of our Charity-Money from the rest, enjoy'd us to be done on that Day?

A. 1. THIS was the Day of our Christian Liberty by the Resurrection of CHRIST: And as such glorious refreshing News is brought to us by every Sabbath, we should be, (and 'tis suppos'd that we are) melted into Obedience to CHRIST, and into Thankfulness to Him, and into Love to His People for His Sake.

2. THEN Persons have Leisure from their worldly Business, to receive the Providence of GOD towards them, in the past Week; and 'tis suppos'd, that we are on that Day more spiritual in our Frames, *Rev. 1. 10.* and so there is another Advantage taken against the Carnality of our own Hearts.

III. THE Extensiveness of this Rule, or who must lay by them in Store? Answer EVERY ONE. Every One has something, and out of that he is to give something to Others; *Ephes. 4. 28.* Let him labour, working with his Hands, that he may have to give to him that wants. Tho' poor, he must give something to those that are poorer than himself: As the upper Boughs drop on the lower, and they upon the Boughs still below them, and the lowest of all drop on the Ground. The Lord CHRIST, when on Earth, liv'd (you know) on the Contributions of His Followers; and yet Judas, who was His Steward, was at Times order'd to give something to the Poor. *John 13. 29.* You have not great Things! Well! But give Alms of such Things as you have, *Luke*

11. 41.

Q. BUT

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Q. BUT may the Wife be found in these Acts of Charity, without her Husband's Consent or Knowledge?

A. THE Laws of Marriage do not make void those Laws of GOD which were obligatory upon her before Marriage. I Answer then, she *may*; nay, she *must*: For, 1st, She is her Husband's Partner in the Use of all his Goods, in common with him, and if for the bodily Life, much more for the spiritual. 2^{dly}, Good Works are laid upon the Woman, as well as the Man; 1 *Tim.* 2. 10. and this prior, this former Bond, or Obligation laid upon her from the LORD, her Husband cannot annul, or make void: Nay, he loses his Authority, when he lifts it up against GOD. 3^{dly}, *Abigail* did so, and the Scripture smiles upon her Practice in so doing, 1 *Sam.* 25. 3. The good House-Wife, or Vertuous Woman is prais'd for so doing, *Prov.* 31. 20. *She stretcheth out her Hand to the Poor, yea, she reacheth out her Hands to the Needy*; farther still! Those good Women that follow'd CHRIST, *Luke* 8. 3. *Ministred to Him of their Substance*, which the Lord CHRIST would not have accepted, had it been contrary to their Duty to their Husbands, and consequently, contrary to His own Holy Law.

IV. *THE Quantum* they are to give: Or, the Rule we are to guide our selves by; or according to which we are to lay by us in Store; and that is, as GOD has prosper'd him. Some give much, as our Lord observ'd, when He saw the Rich Men cast in of their Abundance into the Treasury: Some can give very little, as the Poor Widow, who brought but two Mites, and pray mark, how kindly this was taken,

V. *THE*

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V. **THE** Ground of this Practise. It was an Apostolical Order, *As I have given Order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye.* Or, consider the Words, as containing a Motive to these good Works, taken from the Example of the Primitive Christians: It is the Glory of a Church to be a Pattern to others: But, if we cannot our selves be Original Patterns and Examples to others, it is well, and commendable in us, if we can follow the good Examples of others. This Injunction laid upon the Churches of *Galatia*, and here upon the Church of *Corinth*, lyes upon us.

Doct. *IT is one Principal Part of the Communion of SAINTS, to help, and succour those of them that are in Want.*

Here I would shew,

- I. *WHAT Rule we are to go by, in Helping those that are in Want?*
- II. *THAT this is one Principal Part of the Communion of Saints.*
- III. *I WOULD next obviate, or answer some of the Principal Objections, that rise up in the Heart against this Doctrine.*
- IV. *APPLY the whole.*

I. *WHAT Rule we are to go by, in Helping those in Want?*

1. *WE are to consider their Necessity, Acts 4. 35. Distribution was made to every Man, according as he had Need. James 2. 16. Such Things as are needful to the Body. They need that which would keep*
us

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us from Destruction. *Mat. 6. 31, 32. Therefore take no Thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be cloathed; for your Heavenly Father knows, that ye have need of these Things. All light Poverty (say Divines) is to be supply'd out of thy superfluous Expences: Where 'tis greater, 'tis to be supply'd out of thy Conveniencies: But where Poverty is extream, it is to be supply'd out of thy Necessaries. Nay, tho' you sell of your Estate you must give, at least when you do sell, Luke 12. 33. Sell that ye have, and give Alms.*

2. ACCORDING to thy Ability, that is also to be consider'd: *Acts. 11. 29. Then the Disciples every Man according to his Ability determin'd to send Relief unto the Brethren that dwelt in Judea. In Order to fix my Ability, what it is; I am to consider my own Expences, my Necessary Expences, and to contract, or cut off those that the Vanity of Mind makes so: And then I can make a Judgment how I can hold to give, and that is my Ability. I am so to give, as I can hold to give all the Year round, and all my Life. Psalm 112. 5. The Holy Ghost connects, and joyns these two Things together: Shewing Favour to others, and guiding our own Affairs with Discretion.*

3. YOU are to consider an Order in your Acts of Charity. I suppose, you are sincerely desirous of a plain Directory in a little Room. You have a general Direction: *Deut. 26. 13, 14. Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy GOD, I have brought away the Hallow'd Things out of mine House, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the Stranger, to the Fatherless, and to the Widow, according to all thy Commandments, which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy Commandments, neither have I forgotten them. I have not eaten thereof in my Mourning, neither have I taken away*
ought

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ought thereof for any unclean Use, nor given ought thereof for the Dead: But I have hearkened to the Voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.

But more particularly,

1. A MAN is first of all to consider his own Family: His Wife and Children. 1 Tim. 5. 8. *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath deny'd the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.*

2. IN the second Place, he is to relieve his Parents, if he has any, in Want. 1 Tim. 5. 4. *But if any Widow have Children, or Grand-Children, let them learn FIRST to shew Piety at Home, and requite their Parents: For that is good, and acceptable before GOD.* Where note, that by FIRST in this Verse, we are to understand the Apostle, as postponing all other Persons, exclusive of his own Family; that is, when he has consider'd his own Family, then FIRST before any others in the World, he is to study Gratitude to, and Requital of his Parents.

3. THEN spiritual Relations next. Mat. 12. 46,-----50. *Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren? he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven; the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.* Our Lord prefers His spiritual Relations to, and above His carnal. The Children of GOD, and the Support of the Gospel-Ministry come in here: And tho' we are to do good to all Men, Gal. 6. 10. yet especially to the Household of Faith.

4. CARNAL Relations are next to be consider'd in the fourth Place. Tho' spiritual Affections are to be stronger than carnal, yet they

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are

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are not to supercede, or to swallow them up. For Prov. 17. 17. *A Brother is born for Adversity.*

5. THEN Neighbours. Deut. 15. 7, 8. Luke 10. 29. *Who is my Neighbour?* CHRIST answers in the Verses following.

6. THEN Strangers, Mat. 25: 35. *I was a Stranger, and ye took Me in.* Heb. 13. 2. *Be not forgetful to entertain Strangers, for some have thereby entertain'd Angels, as (Abraham, and Lot did) unawares.*

7. Lastly, THOU art to do Good to thy very Enemies. Exod. 23. 4, 5. *If thou meet thine Enemy's Ox, or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his Burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.* Mat. 5. 44, 45, 46. *Love your Enemies, do Good to them that hate you.* And Rom. 12. 20, 21. *If thine Enemy hunger, feed him: If he thirst, give him Water to drink, &c.*

II. *THIS is one Principal Part of the Communion of Saints.*

1. THERE is such a Thing as the Communication of our Faith to One another, Philemon 6. with the Grounds and Reasons on which our Faith and Hope is built; 1 Pet. 3. 15. where it is observable, that altho' we are not oblig'd to offer to every One this Account, how GOD has dealt with our Souls; yet we are oblig'd to it, when it shall be asked of us, in Order to the Edification of Others.

2. BUT one Principal Part of the Communion of Saints stands in this Work of Charity now under Consideration. Phil. 4. 14, 15. *Ye have done well,*

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well, that ye did communicate with mine Affliction, for no Church communicated with me, as concerning Giving and Receiving, but ye only. And this, indeed, is one of the most Noble Efforts, and Fruits of our Faith; according to that Saying of our LORD, deliver'd down by Tradition, and at last recorded *Acts 20. 35. It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

THEY that receive of thy Bounty will be encourag'd in the Way of GOD, and honour Him the more; and thou shalt have Comfort of thy Money so bestow'd. *2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. All Judah brought to Jehosaphat Presents, and he had Riches and Honours in abundance, and his Heart was lift up in the Ways of the LORD.*

AGAIN! The Giver receives something: Even all Blessing from the Poor. The Sides of the Poor, Job said, blessed him, whom he had cloathed with his Fleece. They receive your Carnal Things, and you receive their Spiritual, *Rom. 15. 27.* and they are far better. *1 Cor. 9. 11. If we have sown unto you Spiritual Things, is it a great Thing if we shall reap your Carnal Things?* Mind! with what an holy Contempt he speaks of Carnal Things, when compar'd with Spiritual. You have their Affections by this Means, and then you must needs have their Prayers. *2 Cor. 9. 14, 15. They glorify GOD, and pray for you. 2 Tim. 1. 16, 17, 18. The LORD give Mercy to the House of Onesiphorus, for he oft refresh'd me, and was not asham'd of my Chains, &c, Onesiphorus lost nothing by his Kindness to Paul, nor shall any Man by his Kindness to the Godly.*

III. NOW I would obviate, or answer some of the Principal Objections, that rise up in the Heart against this Doctrine.

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Objection 1. *I HAVE many Children to provide for ; it cannot be expected I should do much this way.*

I KNOW not, whether I need give an Answer to this Objection, or no : For generally speaking (tho' it does not hold of all) they are more free, and bounteous, that have an House full of Children, than they that have but One, or few, or none at all : That Man was a Wonder to *Solomon* in his Day, and he is so in ours, and shall be so in every Age ; who having neither Child, nor Brother, *Eccles. 4. 8. Yet is there no End of all his Labour, neither is his Eye satisfy'd with Riches, neither saith he for whom do I labour, and bereave my Soul of Good.* However the Objection looks plausible, and requires an Answer ; I say then,

1. THIS is a Spiritual Fund that I am now inviting you to ; not on which you shall expend, and lose your Money ; but from which you shall have an abiding Supply. Have you many Children, and little to leave them, you had the more need to leave them a Blessing ; GOD charges Parents, *Deut. 12. 25. to act becomingly, and obediently to GOD, That it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the Sight of the Lord.* Again, *Ver. 28. Observe, and hear all these Words that I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee for ever, when thou do'st that which is good, and right in the Sight of the Lord thy God.* Thine own upright Walk before the Lord in the Faith and Obedience of the Gospel, will more tend to make thy Posterity rich, and happy, than large Portions laid up for them in a sinful Way.

BESIDES ! How absurd is this ? To neglect thy own Duty, that thy Children may be able to

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to do that, which thou wast able to do, but never didst: But how do you know they will be more willing than you are now?

2. YOU must needs rectify this Mistake of yours, (or you will never do much Good with your Estates) all you get is not yours, to lay out on your selves, or lay up for your Children: If your Estate be incumbered with Debts upon it, you first pay off the Mortgage, and Incumbrances; that it may descend clear to your Children. So here! First pay thy Debts, Man! And then you will see what you have of your own. To pay one Debt, does not discharge another: You must defraud none. Prov. 3. 27. *Withhold not Gold from them to whom it is due; or, as it is in the Margin, from the Owners thereof.*

Q. WHAT Debts?

A. 1. THAT you owe to your own House and Family I need not insist on: Many on Pretence discharging this; deny all that they owe other Ways. But I pray, remember, this is not to swallow up all the rest; Tho' it is to be accounted for among the rest.

2. **WHAT** you owe to the House of the King. The Magistrate is to have his Part out of thy Estate: *For this Cause pay we Tribute also:* For the Magistrate, and Civil Government must be thus supported. Again! *Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.*

3. **WHAT** you owe to the House of GOD for the Maintenance and Support of the Gospel-Ministry. Some of you will not, it may be, hear those that are not educated for the Ministry, and set apart for their Work, as 1 Tim. 4. 15. enjoyns. They can only tell us (say you) their own Experience (NOT SION'S) and we can do that as well as they. Now if you desire, that the
Ministers

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Ministers you sit under, should be set apart for, and attend wholly on their Work ; how can this be, without your Subjection to CHRIST's Order ? 1 Cor. 9. 14. *That they that preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel.*

BUT it may be observ'd, to the Shame of many, that they begin their Thrift at the House of GOD. Instead of sparing from their unnecessary Expences, for the Sake of GOD's Holy Worship, they detract from It, that they may spend profusely on vain Pleasures. Read 2 Cor. 12, 13. it is very notable there, that St. Paul makes it a Mark of Inferiority in the Church of *Corinth*, to other Churches ; in that, when *others* contributed towards his Maintenance, *they* did nothing, they excus'd themselves from bearing their Part in the Support of the Gospel-Ministry.

3. WHAT you owe to the House of the Poor, of which more afterwards.

Objection 2. *THE Teacher shall not direct my Purse, may I not do what I will with my own ?*

A. 1. YET you'll allow the Physician to prescribe to you, and submit to be directed by him, if your Health be in Danger : The Gentlemen skill'd in the Law shall with deep Attention be listned to, in Matters that relate to your Estates ; while the same Men will allow us no Province but the Pulpit, (for out of that, we may not tell them, tho' in their own Parlours, of their Drunkenness, or Pride, of their Injustice, Oppression, or persecuting Rage against the Children of GOD) and even there the unregenerate Part of our Auditory would be ever best pleas'd, if we would only make an Harrangue, and flourish our Sword in the Air, without striking
upon

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upon Conscience, or wounding that with a Sense of Sin.

BUT the Preacher shall not direct your Purse, no, nor your Conscience neither, and yet this is the Province allotted him of GOD. *The Priest's Lips shall preserve Knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his Mouth; for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts,* Mal. 2. 7. For, if he was hearkened unto in directing one, so he would also consequently in directing the other: Yet this I will say, that Mens Expences run in the same Channel with their Affections: Their Money goes that Way their Hearts go. Then our Submission to GOD is true, (and not 'till then) when we submit our Estates to Him, *Psalms* 68. 30. *Isaiah* 60. 6. speaking of Converts under the Gospel, says, when they come to CHRIST, *they bring their Gold and Incense with them; which they us'd to carry another Way, even to their Idols.* v. 19. *Their Silver and their Gold with them, unto the Name of the Lord thy GOD.*

2. BUT may you not do what you will with your own? Yes! You may, if you know what is so: If you have any Thing of your own, that GOD has no Propriety to, or Interest in; but GOD speaks to thee, as the King of Syria did to *Ahab*, ALL THAT THOU HAST, IS MINE. And the Church acknowledges as much, *1 Chron.* 29. 12. *Both Riches and Honour come of thee, and in thy Hand it is to make great.* Ver. 14. *Of thine own have we given thee.* Ver. 16. *O Lord our GOD, all this Store that we have prepar'd to build thee an House for thy Holy Name, cometh of thine Hand, and is all thine own.*

MAY I not do what I will with my own? I answer. That Saying came from Hell. More plainly then. You may not do what you will with that, you call

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call your own, because it is not so, let every Man first have what is due to him out of thy Estate, thy own Children, GOD's Children, the Children of the World, then enjoy the rest, and the Lord give His Blessing with it.

U S E.

IN perswading Men to be found in this so great a Duty, pleasing to others, profitable to themselves, and honourable to GOD. I enter I confess, upon a difficult Province, some, that have the Grace of GOD, have desir'd to have this Duty rightly stated, that they may know how they are herein to walk with GOD. Others would be glad of Help against the Carnality of their own Hearts; and these are the Persons to whom I now address my self. Consider then,

1. SOME Part and Portion of what thou hast is due to the Poor. Deut. 15. 11. *The Poor shall never cease out of the Land. Therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thy Hand wide unto thy Brother, to thy Poor, and to thy Needy in thy Land.* Called thy Poor, because they are under thy Eye, and GOD has given thee the Charge of them: *The Poor*, says our Lord, John 13. *you have always with you*, and shall have, as a Tryal of our Faith, and Love, and Respect to Himself, to whom if we would do Honour, it must be by Anointing His Feet; for Himself who dwells on High, we can no other Ways reach. GOD will have the World a feeble Thing, on Purpose, that Men may lean on His Arm, and acknowledge their Dependance on His Care. Now as a Portion of what thou hast is due to the Poor; so thou art guilty of Injustice, if thou stoppest any Man of his Due, Prov. 3. 27. Think then with thy self, I owe this to the House of GOD, I owe so much to the House of the King, and so much to the House of the Poor; then

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the rest I account my own, yet I may lay out on my self, or lay up for my Children.

AGAIN! Thou art but a Steward of the manifold Gifts of GOD, who has reserv'd to Himself, a Liberty to draw a Bill upon thee, when He pleases: He allows thee to enjoy very large Possessions indeed, but He has not disseiz'd Himself of, or given away His Right in them; but only transfer'd it to the Poor, whom He has deputed to receive for Him, such, and such Rents of His: And whenever thou art called upon in this Way, say within thy self; GOD has given this poor Man a Bill upon me to Day, and I will readily pay it.

2. GOD Himself becomes thy Pay-Master, and has given thee His Bond to repay thee, when thou most shalt need (but in this He will be the sole Judge) His Promises in His written Word, are His Bonds, such as Prov. 11. 5. *The liberal Soul shall be made fat: And He that watereth, shall be water'd also himself.* Chap. 19. 17. *He that hath Pity on the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which He hath given, will He pay him again.* He is graciously pleas'd you see, to substitute Himself Debtor in the Room of the Poor. This is Sowing, 2 Cor. 9. The Husband-Man believes GOD's Providence, and ventures his Seed in the Ground, tho' Varieties of Weather pass over it; but he first sows, before he can expect to reap.

THUS we bring our selves under temporal Promises. See a Troop, or Cluster of them in one Text, Psal. 41. 1, 2, 3. *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor, the Lord will deliver him in Time of Trouble, the Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the Earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the Will of his Enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the Bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness.* What a glorious Constellation is here! He will deliver such in a Time of Trouble; and such Times

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will overtake every Man of us sooner or later: *He will not deliver him into the Will of his Enemies.* And those Persons who have been shut up, for a Time, in the Hands of wicked Men (who have no Bowels, *The tender Mercies of the wicked are cruel.* Not one Drop of Compassion to a good Man, with whom, if offended, they will accept of no Atonement) these, surely these are they, that know how to value this golden Promise. Farther, in Health GOD will feed him, in Sicknes He will make his Bed, and he must needs lye soft, and easie, whose Conscience is perfum'd with a Sense of GOD's Love, Isa. 58. 10, 11, 12. *The Lord shall guide such continually, and satisfy their Soul in Drought, and make fat thy Bones, and thou shalt be like a water'd Garden;* and full of the Graces and Consolations of GOD, as a sorrowful Spirit dries up the Bones, so a chearful Spirit is said, by Way of Opposition, to make the Bones fat. This Man shall be successful in his worldly Business, Deut. 15. 10. *Thou shalt surely give him, and thine Heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: Because, that for this Thing, the Lord thy GOD shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto.* Psal. 1. 3. *Whatsoever he doth shall prosper.* Prov. 28. 27. *He shall not lack.* Luke 6. 38. But shall have Plenty, full Measure, pressed, shaken together, and yet running over; but if GOD shall see Good, to keep this Man low in his own Person, then his Seed shall have Advantage from his bounteous Acts, Psal. 37. 26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth, and his Seed is blessed.*

Q. BUT how far are we to bind upon temporal Promises under the Gospel?

A. 1. THE New Testament establishes the Old, and the Promises of it. 1 Tim. 4. 8. Godliness is profitable to all things, having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.

2. BUT seeing these are to be understood with Exception of the Cross, I add, if these are not fulfilled

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fill'd to us, yet all we have shall be sanctify'd. *Luke* 11. 41.

3. CONSIDER, Thou shalt make thy self Friends of thy Riches thus employ'd.

1. WE make these Enjoyments themselves our Friends, *Luke* 16. 9. being thus us'd, they come in as Friends, and give Evidence for us. Evidences of our Faith, that we must needs believe Spiritual Promises, for we believe Temporal, which are, indeed, more difficult to believe, in regard they are not so peremptory, and absolute as Spiritual: And in regard they are daily, and more visibly contradicted by Providence. Evidences of our Love, *2 Cor.* 8. last. *Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the Churches the Proof of your Love.* Evidences of our Obedience, *2 Cor.* 9. 13. *By the Experiment of this Ministration, they glorify GOD for your professed Subjection unto the Gospel of CHRIST, and for your liberal Distribution unto them, and unto all Men.*

2. BY thy good Use of Outward Things, thou shalt make many Persons thy Friends: Such a poor Man to whom thou hast been kind, is ever ready to direct, and counsel thee, whose Society and Communion helps thee in Grace, and Spiritual Peace, and Assurance of the Love of GOD, and makes thy Life much sweeter to thee, than else it would be: And how canst thou use what thou hast in the World better, than in helping thy Soul to Heaven, which was the very Design of GOD in giving to thee what he has given.

USE of DIRECTION,

I CLOSE all with a Word of *ADVICE*, to make this Work both Easy, and Delightful to us.

1. GIVE! Tho' at first it goes against the Grain, and thy Carnal Heart hangs back. Exercise of

C 2

Grace

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Grace strengthens it, and facilitates the Exercise of it.

GIVE ! It may be, 'tis all thou canst do, to help the Church of GOD thro' this World : Others can help them by their Spiritual Gifts, thou canst help them no other way than by thy Purse.

GIVE freely, and account it your Honour to run along with your Fellow-Christians in such Works ; if they would excuse you, yet you should refuse to be excus'd. See 2 Cor. 8. 4. they entreat Paul to receive their Charity, and to distribute it. *Praying us with much Entreaty, that we would receive the Gift, and take upon us the Fellowship of the Ministering to the Saints.*

GIVE chearfully ! Deut. 15. 10. *Thy Heart shall not be grieved when thou givest to him ; because for this Thing the LORD thy GOD shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto.* 2 Cor. 9. 7. *Not grudgingly, or of Necessity, for GOD loves a chearful Giver.*

2. GIVE now in thy Life-Time ; whilst thou mayst be refresh'd, by beholding the Fruits of thy Bounty, by Encouraging the Saints in their Walking with GOD. Neglect not thy present Seasons, Prov. 3. 28. *Say not unto thy Neighbour, go, and come again to Morrow, and I will give, when thou hast it by thee.*

GIVE at least at your Death ; if thy Circumstances in the World are such, that thou canst do it no sooner. But know this ; nothing, but meer Necessity will excuse thy Delay so long ; and that the Debt being real, is not discharg'd by a long Non-Payment.

Objection, *BUT I have not Ability to give in all these Ways, you have mention'd.*

Answer. Then single out some special Objects of your Charity, either more suited to the Frame of thy Spirit ; or according to the Exigencies of the Times ;

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Times; or to such as are more disregarded, or neglected by others.

HOW many Orphans may you know of, that are left low, and comfortless. *1 Tim. 5. 10.* The *Bringing up of Children*, or Helping Others in doing so, is reckon'd up, by the Apostle among those Good Works, that are recommended to the Practise of Christians, as being acceptable to GOD.

SO many Ministers of CHRIST as you know in low Circumstances, so many Objects there are that invite, and call forth your Charity: Such especially as GOD has own'd to thy own Soul. Let those that have been instrumental to help thee to Heaven, and to comfort thee by the Way, have their Lives render'd more comfortable whilst on Earth, by thy Smiles, and Bounty. Converted Tyre, *Isa. 23. last.* turns her Bounty into another Channel, than formerly: No longer on Fine Houses, and Rich Furniture, no longer on Costly Dainties, or Vain Dresses, no longer is she, as of old, *making Provision for the Flesh*, or to *fulfil this Lust*, or that; but as you see there, *Her Merchandize and her Hire shall be Holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasur'd, nor laid up: For her Merchandize shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable Cloathing.*

LET me recommend to thy Charitable Notice, Ministers Widows, that are left in Straits: *2 Kings 4. 1 ----- 7. Elisha* works a Miracle for the Relief of a Prophet's Widow; which Miracle on her Behalf, shews how acceptable the Thing was to GOD. 'Tis a Reproach to those Congregations that are wealthy, who upon the Death of their Ministers, who were in their Day faithful to GOD, and their Souls; cast off their Widows, and utterly neglect them. If this was a Thing to be complain'd of, as you see it was, *Acts 6. 1.* that the Widows of such, and such Godly Persons

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Persons were neglected, in the daily Ministration, how much worse, and more blameable a Neglect is this? when 'tis the Widow of a Godly Minister, nay, of thy own Minister, under whose Ministry the Ordinances of GOD drop'd down Fatness on thy Soul. Was not the whole World in Debt to *Luther*? Yet when after his Death, his Widow, by a Fall, had a broken Bone, she had not wherewith to pay the Bone-setter. O Ungrateful *Germany*! O Ungrateful World!

Quest. *BUT where shall I deposite it, the World is unfaithful?*

Ans. PUT it into the Church-Stock, for the Use of the Poor; to be improv'd for them, and to be dispos'd of according to the Discretion, and Wisdom of the Church to which you belong; as is the Way and Manner of some of the best Churches, at this Day, in the World.

3. I MUST re-assume the Words of my Text, that you may be the more ready to this Kind of Good Works, *Separate your Charity-Money from the rest, and lay it by you in Store.*

Quest. *How will this help the Matter?*

A. AS it will help against Worldliness, and cut off carnal Excuses; when thou hast set apart, and consecrated such a Part and Portion to GOD, thou dost not look upon it any longer as thy own: It is *Corban*: It is devoted to GOD: Which if it be not given this Way, must be given some other Way: It may return into thine own Purse no more. *Deut.* 26. 13, 14. *Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy GOD, Thou shalt be able to make this Appeal to Him, I have brought away the Hallow'd Things out of mine House, and also have given them to the Levite, Stranger, Fatherless, and Widow. Ver. 14. Neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean Use, that is, I have not us'd it as my own, after I had given it*

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to GOD, we are to be, *ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, 1 Tim. 6. 18. Now, when it thus lyes by us, in a Readiness, 'tis a *Matter of Bounty*, 2 Cor. 9. 5. *not of Covetousness*.

IF Men would take this Method, and lay by them something, tho' very little every Week, it would amount to something considerable in the Year: So that there would be few, very few Congregations, but would be able to maintain the Gospel among them at their own Charge, without Dependance on other Churches, and sending up a Cry every Year,
O LONDON HELP US.

4. AS to the *Quantum* of what you are thus to lay by, I cannot, but you can easily determine it for your selves. It must be *according as GOD has prosper'd every Man*. Or it will not be accepted of GOD, because not according to His Direction here, nor be any Evidence to thy self of thy Sincerity before Him: For 'tis not every Obedience, but self-denying Obedience, that is the Evidence and Proof of a sincere Faith. But 'tis utterly impossible, for those that spend more upon vain Pleasures, than charitable Uses, to make out their Faith in CHRIST, or Love to His People, or their Sincerity in their Profession. Give thus, and you will give bountifully (as an *Araunah*, who was suppos'd formerly to have been a King among the *Jebusites*, gave like a King) give thus, and then you will give in an Equality, with other godly Christians. 2 Cor. 8. 13, 14. *Some will not be eased, whilst others are burden'd*. Which, Professors, had they not divested themselves of all Modesty, would not be so oft guilty of.

Q. *BUT if you cannot determine for us, you can direct us.*

A. *JACOB* vows a Tenth Part of his Estate to GOD, and Divines (so far as I have read) are generally agreed, that less than that is scarce sufficient
to

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to prove our Sincerity. GOD expects we should give in Proportion to what we receive of Him. One Man worth a *Thousand*, or *Fifteen Hundred Pounds*, does less, or no more in promoting the Gospel, than he who is worth but *Two Hundred*. No Wonder, that Estates so often change their Owners, GOD is displeas'd, and takes them away from those that use them no better. Did such never read, then let them read now, that Scripture, Deut. 16. 17. *Every Man shall give as he is able, according to the Blessing of the LORD thy GOD, which He hath given thee.*

Objection. *THUS we should soon be all Poor.*

1. **WITHHOLDING** makes more Poor than Giving. Prov. 11. 24. *There is withholding more than is meet, but it tendeth to Poverty.* Tho' it does not bring it upon the Man presently, yet 'tis a secret Moth, and has an invisible Tendency that Way.

2. **DEALING** with a bountiful Hand never broke a Trades-man yet. 2 Cor. 9. 6, 7. Again, Isa. 32. 8. *The liberal Soul deviseth liberal Things*: How, which Way (says he) in himself, shall I most honour GOD? And encourage His Children? And does this Course impoverish the Man? No! **BY LIBERAL THINGS SHALL HE STAND.**

F I N I S.

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